

Vice President for Research Makes Grand Challenge Announcement to UT Community

Researchers from nearly two dozen disciplines have been working for more than a year to build a grand challenge project that produces a new way to study human communities while, at the same time, responding to a critically underserved group in Central Texas: children and families living with adversity.

Dear UT community:

Last month, during his State of the University Address, President Fennes announced UT’s second Bridging Barriers research grand challenge: [Whole Communities–Whole Health](#).

Grand challenges are moonshot goals. These are large research initiatives imagined and designed by our faculty and graduate students from almost every department on campus, working together to generate new knowledge and create new modes of thinking as they attempt to solve urgent social, environmental, and humanitarian problems.

Our first grand challenge, Planet Texas 2050, launched this past January. More than 120 researchers from around campus are combining new and existing data and creating new forms of analysis to make Texas more resilient in the face of massive population growth and changes in our climate, including increasingly extreme weather events. You can [follow along](#) on their journey and learn about the projects they’re undertaking to ensure our region is safe, healthy, and viable well into the future.

Now, I’m proud to introduce our next grand challenge.

Researchers from nearly two dozen disciplines have been working for more than a year to build a grand challenge project that produces a new way to study human communities while, at the same time, responding to a critically underserved group in Central Texas: children and families living with adversity.

We know that not everyone begins life on the same starting line or has an equal opportunity to profit from their innate talent and drive. Exposure to prolonged or acute stress and trauma during childhood can manifest later in serious ways that reduce opportunity and act as roadblocks in life. When that happens, society suffers a great loss of skill, spirit, and resources.

To help overcome this, Whole Communities–Whole Health will completely rethink how researchers work with families. They will make sure the families they partner with are informed, empowered, and able to use information from their study in real time to make changes in their lives that can have lasting benefits. Through wearable and home devices that log physical, social, and environmental information, this grand challenge brings together new ideas and techniques that can be applied broadly to many social and health problems.

Please take a moment to read more about [Whole Communities–Whole Health](#) and the multidisciplinary team that has designed this project from the ground up. I hope you’ll congratulate and support them as they embark on this 8-year academic mission to change the way science and scholarship help society thrive.

Sincerely,



DANIEL JAFFE, Vice President for Research
[The University of Texas at Austin](#)

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

We’re committed to harnessing the talent, passion, and expertise of researchers from all disciplines at UT to tackle some of humanity’s biggest challenges.

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